

FOREWORD

The Consumer Labeling Initiative (CLI), a pilot program of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, was initiated in March 1996. The initiation of the project was announced in a *Federal Register (FR)* notice dated March 22, 1996 (61 FR 12011). The goal of the CLI is to foster pollution prevention, empower consumer choice, and improve consumer understanding of safe use, environmental, and health information on household consumer product labels. The CLI is a multi-phased pilot project focusing on indoor insecticides, outdoor pesticides, and household hard surface cleaners (i.e., floor and basin, tub and tile), some of which are registered antimicrobials/disinfectants. The CLI has involved a wide range of participants representing many interests related to consumer labeling issues, including federal and state government agencies, private industry, public interest groups, and individual citizens.

CLI participants have worked voluntarily for more than three years, with the goal of finding ways to help consumers:

- # quickly locate essential safe and appropriate use, environmental, and health information on product labels;
- # use information on the labels to reasonably compare products intended for similar uses;
- # purchase, use, store, and dispose of products safely and with minimal effect on the environment; and
- # make informed choices among products based on their own needs and values.

Phase I of the CLI involved performing qualitative consumer research and summarizing existing research and programs concerning the effectiveness and limitations of labeling as a policy tool to protect public health. The *Phase I Report* (EPA-700-R-96-001, September 1996) published the findings, recommendations, and action steps that resulted from Phase I research. Recommendations made at the conclusion of Phase I included the suggestion for a second phase.

Phase II of the CLI began in October 1996. Phase II of the CLI followed directly from Phase I, with the intention of providing more support for the Phase I research findings. Its activities were intended to include the following:

- # perform in-depth quantitative research to establish a baseline of consumer understanding, attitudes, behavior, and satisfaction about product labels;
- # carry out qualitative research on potential standardized information, particularly for ingredients, precautionary statements, and signal words;
- # develop a multi-faceted, broad-based education campaign to 1) help consumers understand and use labels effectively, and 2) disseminate information about future labeling changes;

- # find simpler, clearer ways to word label information about what to do in an accident or emergency involving household products;
- # perform research about storage and disposal information, with the goal of improving labels to address conflicting laws, ordinances, and community practices for waste recycling and disposal; and
- # identify other information about ingredients that consumers want and need on labels for pesticides and other products.